

Moose

General

Moose are truly the lords of Canada's boreal forest. Weighing in at up to 600 kilograms, or over 1,300 pounds with an antler spread that can be up to 180 cm, or nearly six feet from tip to tip, old "bucket nose" is the largest member of the deer family.

Moose are found roaming the marsh and muskeg filled forests from Alaska to Newfoundland and even reaching up into the northern tundra.

A very important economic resource, especially for northern communities where moose meat is often a staple food source, moose hunting injects up to 500 million dollars annually to the Canadian economy.

The word "moose" comes from the Algonquin Indians who are native to many northern regions of Canada. The Algonquin called this strange looking creature *mooswa*. It means "twig-eater" or "the animal that strips bark off of trees." Over the years the word evolved into the present day "moose."

Although well adapted for cold climates moose cannot tolerate the heat. It is not uncommon to find moose submerged in cool marshlands or lakes for hours at a time during the warm summer months, especially during periods of peak insect activity.

Habitat

Muskeg, marsh, beaver meadows, and lakes; this is where you will find moose. These powerful swimmers prefer a habitat that allows them to graze on the tender roots of wetland vegetation and yet seek out the dense forest for protection.

It is estimated that there are between 500,000 and a million moose in Canada. Due to their solitary nature and vast range their preferred habitat is their greatest asset.

Feeding

With a digestive system that is particularly well adapted for the digestion of woody foods like tender twigs and branches it is quite common to find areas of willow, birch, and aspen that look like someone trimmed them back with a hedge trimmer. Finding a location like this is a good sign that moose have been browsing.

They are particularly fond of wetland vegetation and feed hungrily on pre emergent aquatic plants. They are not only expert swimmers but can also dive up to 5m and feed under water.

Breeding

In most parts of Canada the rut begins sometime around mid September. Although a bull moose may take more than one mate they typically breed with only one female each year. Moose usually breed for the first time at around two years of age and give birth to one or

two calves each spring. The newborn calves stay with the mother for the first year and are driven off just before the next birthing season...

Hunting Considerations

A few things to consider when hunting moose are:

- Moose have very poor eyesight, but this is compensated with a keen sense of smell and acute hearing.
- Moose, especially bull moose, can be very aggressive during the rut and can easily mistake a hunter using a call for a mate or adversary. It is not uncommon for moose to charge a car or even a bus.
- Consider the physical location of the moose you intend to harvest. These are huge animals and the work just begins when you kill your moose.
- Come prepared with the correct gun cartridge or broadhead. These are big animals and can be tough to kill. No hunter wants to see a wounded animal or be forced to follow a track for miles.
- Although the moose appears slow and plodding don't be misled; they can run up to 35 miles per hour and swim for miles.
- Good physical conditioning is a must if you intend to hunt moose. The terrain is very demanding and a long planned hunting vacation will turn out to be a laborious, seemingly endless chore if you are not prepared.
- Never, never shoot a swimming moose! It is just plain irresponsible, because the odds of retrieving your prize are not good. Even a moose downed in shallow water is a nearly impossible chore unless you have lots of help and all of the necessary equipment to handle over a half ton of wet moose.

Other Issues

Moose respond well to a well managed habitat. Areas such as clear cuts and burnouts provide ideal conditions for moose after the undergrowth begins to reemerge. Moose populations must be managed to keep populations within the sustainability margins of their food source. Over population is one of the prime considerations in the overall management of this important resource.